



North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

Priority Points

April 26, 2013

Almost There!

As the 2012-13 school year comes to a close, our team at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) is already preparing for 2013-14! As we all know, the world of federal programs is constantly evolving and with that process comes much excitement and, at times, some confusion.

Seventy-seven (77) schools now comprise the State's list of "Priority Schools." In addition to forty (40) schools implementing a school intervention model under the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program, North Carolina identified thirty-seven (37) schools under the Priority school methodology stated in the North Carolina Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility Request (ESEA Flex) submitted and approved by the U.S. Department of Education in May of 2012.

During the 2013-14 school year, four different "types" of Priority schools will be serving students in North Carolina. These include:

- **SIG Cohort I (2010)** - schools who completed their three-year School Improvement Grant (SIG) in 2012-13, but who will continue to be identified as a Priority School in NC;
- **SIG Cohort II (2011)** - Schools implementing SIG for a final year in 2013-14;
- **ESEA Priority Schools** - schools (identified under ESEA Flex) continuing to implement interventions aligned with the ESEA Turnaround Principles. Eligible schools/LEAs applying for a School Improvement Grant (SIG) this spring who are not approved will be included in this category; and
- **SIG Cohort III (2013)** - Priority Schools identified under ESEA Flex approved for SIG Cohort III this spring.

Below, please find important information that is specific to each type of Priority School.

Transitioning to 2013-14

SIG Cohort I

At the end of the 2012-13 school year, our first cohort of SIG schools (23 schools) will have completed their grant cycle. However, these schools will continue to be identified and served under the Priority Schools "umbrella" for two additional years. This will allow them to receive both ongoing support from DPI and additional school improvement funding that may be used to address sustainability. DPI will



continue to support the implementation of interventions through the use of the NC Indistar® Tool and on-site reviews will be scheduled as needed to review progress in each school.

In closing out the 2012-13 year, LEAs with SIG Cohort I schools should:

- Submit the Interventions Annual Report in NC Indistar by June 1, 2013
- Expend or encumber all Program Report Code (PRC) 143 funds by Sept. 30, 2013 and liquidate the account by Dec. 31, 2013.

In preparing for the 2013-14 school year, LEAs with SIG Cohort I schools should:

- Apply for Program Report Code (PRC) 105 funds via the online NC Comprehensive Continuous Improvement Process management tool. This will require the LEA to (1) access the “Planning” tab in the tool and identify that the school has aligned interventions with a SIG model; and (2) Complete the “Grant Details” page for PRC 105 – School Improvement 1003(a) Funds – in the “Funding” section of the tool.
- Upload a PRC 105 Budget*
- Continue to utilize the NC Indistar planning tool to assess, plan, and monitor the 28 Key Indicators.

SIG Cohort II

In closing out the 2012-13 year, LEAs with SIG Cohort II schools should:

- Submit the Interventions Annual Report in NC Indistar by June 1, 2013.
- Continue to expend or encumber Program Report Code (PRC) 117 funds.

In preparing for the 2013-14 school year, LEAs with SIG Cohort II schools should:

- Complete the SIG Renewal Application Form for 2013-14 (the form will be provided in a separate email following this newsletter). Submit the form with a copy of your revised/updated SIG Application to George.hancock@dpi.nc.gov by June 30, 2013.
- Upload a PRC 143 Budget – in order to award SIG funds at the approved levels in North Carolina, we must coordinate *regular* School Improvement Grants 1003(g) funds with funds provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). While the first two years of the grant were funded by regular funds (PRC 117), the third year of the grant will be funded via ARRA funds (PRC 143) for School Improvement - 1003(g).
- Continue to utilize the NC Indistar planning tool to assess, plan, and monitor the 28 Key Indicators.



ESEA Priority Schools

In preparing for the 2013-14 school year, LEAs with Priority schools should:

- Apply for Program Report Code (PRC) 105 funds via the online NC Comprehensive Continuous Improvement Process management tool. This will require the LEA to (1) access the “Planning” tab in the tool and identify that the school has aligned interventions with the ESEA Turnaround Principles or has implemented a SIG model; and (2) Complete the “Grant Details” page for PRC 105 – School Improvement 1003(a) Funds – in the “Funding” section of the tool.
- Upload a PRC 105 Budget*
- Continue to utilize the NC Indistar planning tool to assess, plan, and monitor the 28 Key Indicators.

SIG Cohort III

Applications for SIG Cohort III are currently under review and approval notifications will be provided as soon as possible. In closing out the 2012-13 year, LEAs with approved SIG Cohort III schools should:

- Continue to expend or encumber Program Report Code (PRC) 105 funds received in the 2012-13 school year. The period of availability for these funds expires on September 30, 2014.
- Revise the SIG Application budget to reflect the approved allotment (the allotments will be provided following State Board of Education approval). Submit the revised application to George.hancock@dpi.nc.gov by June 30, 2013.

In preparing for the 2013-14 school year, LEAs with SIG Cohort III schools should:

- Upload a PRC 117 Budget – School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds for Cohort III will be provided via PRC 117. The budget uploaded should reflect the year 1 amount approved.
- Continue to utilize the NC Indistar planning tool to assess, plan, and monitor the 28 Key Indicators.

*Planning allotments are currently pending, as we are awaiting final guidance from the U.S. Department of Education – guidance will be relative to sequestration and its impact on School Improvement 1003(a) funds administered in North Carolina under PRC 105. See “PRC 105 Planning Allotments” article later in this newsletter.



U.S. Department of Education Monitoring (ED)

During the week of February 4-8, 2013 the U.S. Department of Education (ED) conducted an on-site SIG Monitoring visit in North Carolina that included a review of the SEA and two LEAs, Guilford County Schools (Oak Hill Elementary) and Durham Public Schools (Hillside High School). According to the ED SIG Monitoring Plan:

Monitoring States' implementation of programs provides an opportunity to examine how States have instituted policies, systems, and procedures to ensure LEA and school compliance with the statute and regulations. Monitoring serves many purposes:

- Formalizes the shared responsibility of ED and the States to improve student achievement and close the achievement gap in order to have all students reach proficiency.
- Provides a vehicle for the Office of School Turnaround's legal responsibility to monitor the implementation of Title I, section 1003(g).
- Ensures that States and school districts provide critical information to parents that enable them to be full partners in their children's education.
- Provides data that inform technical assistance that supports States' and school districts' efforts to improve teaching and learning.
- Provides data to inform ED's policy and national leadership activities.

SIG monitoring, in particular, provides the opportunity to assess early and ongoing implementation efforts and to identify areas where States and LEAs need additional assistance to support effective implementation of turnaround efforts in schools.

We are currently awaiting the final report and look forward to sharing the information provided. Our schools and districts represented North Carolina extremely well and the ED team spoke very highly of our efforts to serve students in our SIG schools.

PRC 105 Planning Allotments

During our Priority Schools Forum in November of 2012, projections were provided for PRC 105 School Improvement 1003(a) funds. As discussed during the Forum, the projections were developed by reviewing the historical level of funding and applying the allotment formula for PRC 105. Since November, we have learned that PRC 105 planning allotments for non-SIG Priority Schools will be impacted by two recent developments:

- (1) Sequestration – The projected cuts to Title I, Part A funding in North Carolina will, in turn, impact the planning allotments for PRC 105. This is due to the fact that PRC 105 funds are generated from a set-aside (reservation) at the state level from Title I, Part A funds. We are currently awaiting additional information from the U.S. Department of Education to determine this potentially negative impact on PRC 105 planning allotments.
- (2) SIG Cohort III – Priority Schools identified under the NC ESEA Flexibility Request are eligible to apply for SIG funds this spring. This is a competitive grant and the number of LEA/Schools approved will have a positive impact on the allotments for PRC 105, in that fewer schools will divide the pool of funds for PRC 105. This is a result of approved schools transitioning over to SIG funding from PRC 105.



NC Priority Schools Advisory Members

- Dan Gilfort, Principal, Durham Performance Learning Center;
- Judy Leahy, SIG Coordinator, Gaston County Schools;
- Alana Hix, Executive Director of Federal Programs, Cumberland County Schools;
- Ron Thompson (Retired), Executive Director, Federal and State Compliance, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools;
- Tonya Faison, Principal, Goldsboro High School; and
- Cedric Gerald, Instructional Coach, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

Advisory members advise in the development of state Priority School policies and procedures and offer ongoing feedback regarding state monitoring and support efforts.

Web Resources

- **Indistar** – A redesigned website is now available at www.indistar.org. Please note that powerpoints are posted for each phase of the Indistar process in addition to other valuable resources. An Indistar Handbook is also available at: <http://www.indistar.org/gettingstarted/>
- The United States Department of Education has re-launched the **School Turnaround Learning Community** (<http://www.schoolturnaroundsupport.org/>). The site features improved chat and search functions and a user-friendly reorganization of resources, aimed at allowing state, district, school, and community leaders to discuss innovative strategies and share promising practices. To date, the site has some 4,300 members, offers over 500 school turnaround resources, and has hosted nearly 60 webinars on critical topics, including early learning, increased learning time, teacher and leader effectiveness, family and community engagement, and supporting secondary and rural schools.
- The **School Improvement Grants** website is available within the Federal Program Monitoring Section site located at: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/program-monitoring/grants/>. SIG Applications and summary information by school/LEA is available at the site, as well as Non-Regulatory Guidance from the US Department of Education (USED).

****For additional information regarding Priority Schools in North Carolina, please contact [George Hancock](#) at 919-807-3911 or [Donna Brown](#) at 919-807-3957.**